



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 8.5.2 Helping other people
- 8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid
- 8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 408 Institutions

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Pingaring CWA Rooms is indicative of the development of the Country Women's Association throughout Western Australia since 1924, and its importance in the community life of isolated country districts when few other services were available. (Criterion 2.1)

Pingaring CWA Rooms was completed in 1956, after two years of largely voluntary effort from the local community. The place is illustrative of the contribution made by women to life in country districts as well as their involvement in broader charitable activities. (Criterion 2.2)

Pingaring CWA Rooms has been associated with the Pingaring Branch of the CWA since its construction in 1956. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

Pingaring CWA Rooms has particular value to the people, particularly the women, of the Pingaring district as a venue of social interaction and community activity. (Criterion 4.1)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Pingaring CWA Rooms contributes to the sense of place of the local community as one of a small group of buildings in the Pingaring township, centrally located within the main street, which comprises the 1950s hall, store and residence. (. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Pingaring CWA Rooms is a representative example of post-World War Two vernacular architecture often used by community organisations as an economic means of establishing their facilities in the interwar and immediate post World War Two period. (Criterion 6.1)

Pingaring CWA Rooms is a good representative example of the importance of the CWA in rural areas, as indicated by its prominent position in the town. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Pingaring CWA Rooms is in fair condition. Some maintenance takes place but it is on an adhoc basis, and several issues, including cracks in the walls and verandahs, require urgent attention.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Pingaring CWA Rooms has adapted to changing needs of the local members of the Country Women's Association who have continuously used the place since its inception. The place has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

There is considerable evidence of the original fabric of *Pingaring CWA Rooms*. The place has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Conservation Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Pingaring CWA Rooms is a concrete-block and corrugated iron building constructed as a meeting and service venue for the Pingaring branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA). The place was built between 1954 and 1956, largely by local voluntary labour.

The first Europeans who occupied the wheatbelt district of Pingaring were sandalwood and mallet-bark collectors. The area was described as arid and inhospitable by explorers through the region, but pastoral leases were taken up with sheep pastured under the care of shepherds. As part of Government policy to encourage agricultural land settlement, railway lines were established across the southwest and central areas of the State, pushing further east into the marginal lands. A line from Yillminning to Kondinin was

constructed forty to fifty miles (65-80 kms) to the west of the district between 1912 and 1915, and another line was opened to Lake Grace, over 30 miles (50 kms) south in 1913. Although many blocks were taken up they were soon relinquished, due to the distance to the railhead and the amount of clearing required. Other lands held more appeal.¹

In January 1925, construction began on the line from Lake Grace to Newdegate, which was only about twenty-miles (30-35 kms) from Pingaring. The expectation of the line resulted in the first lot of blocks being taken up in 1923, with the rest being selected over the next five years. Pingaring was first named North Burngup, after the Burngup siding on the Lake Grace-Newdegate line. In June 1930, construction began on a line that was planned to link Lake Grace with Southern Cross. As well as serving the intervening farmland, the line provided employment for sustenance workers. Construction ended in 1933, when the line reached Hyden, 31 miles (50 kms) northeast of Pingaring.²

A railway dam was established at a large granite rock, about halfway between Lake Grace and Hyden, and a siding, named Pingaring was established there. A small town developed at the siding with a school, store and agricultural hall. Cooperative Bulk Handling (CBH) wheat receival bins were installed in 1938. The railway line from Lake Grace to Hyden was closed in 1957, and road transport took over. Although this resulted in the upgrading of the road, it proved unsuitable for heavy haulage and the railway line was eventually reopened for use on a seasonal basis for the movement of wheat, wool and superphosphate, while passenger transport continued to be provided by bus.³

Pingaring did not have an official townsite. The railway line went through land owned by farmer Luke Price, so whenever land was needed for a building at the siding, he provided it from his landholding.⁴ Social activities in the district centred on sport and dances and other entertainments in the hall. In 1949, the women of the district were interested in forming a branch of the Country Women's Association. Ten women met at the school ground on Sunday 7 August and as the day was bitterly cold with no other shelter available, they held their inaugural meeting in the school bus.⁵

The Country Women's Association was first formed as a non-sectarian and non-political organisation in New South Wales in 1922. Its foundation was prompted by the formation of the Women's Institutes, first in Canada in the late 1890s, and then in Britain from 1913. The motto of the Association was initially: 'Honour to God, Loyalty to the Throne and Empire, Service to the Country through Country Women for Country Women by Country Women', but this was eventually changed to: 'For Home and Country'. The main aim of the Association was to provide services for country women and children. To this end, the CWA established rest rooms and baby health centres in country towns; holiday homes at the seaside or in mountain districts; hostels for children attending school away from home; aged-care

¹ Glynn, Sean, *Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A study of the role of government in the development of the Western Australian wheat belt, 1900-1930*, UWA Press, 1975, pp. 119-133; *The History of Pingaring 1923-1973*, Pingaring Jubilee Committee, 1973, pp. 3 & 6.

² *The History of Pingaring 1923-1973*, op cit, pp. 2-10; Gunzberg, Adrian & Austin, Jeff *Rails Through the Bush*, Light Railway Research Society of Australia, Melbourne, 1997, p. 208.

³ *The History of Pingaring 1923-1973*, op cit, pp. 2-8.

⁴ *Pingaring Past and Present, 1923-1998*, [Pingaring, 1998], entry for Luke Price.

⁵ *The History of Pingaring 1923-1973*, op cit, pp. 2-10.

homes; instruction in first aid, home nursing and handicrafts; library services, music and drama groups, emergency housekeeping services, hospital visiting, and support for elderly citizens.⁶

The CWA formed in Western Australia in 1924, following a talk at the Karrakatta Club by Lady Forster, wife of the Governor General, on the development of the Association in New South Wales. Mrs Mabel Craven-Griffiths, MBE, was Secretary Treasurer of a Provisional Committee and a driving force in the formative years of the Association in Western Australia. The first State conference of the CWA was held in Perth on 10 March 1925. By 1934, there were 124 branches and 26 rest rooms in the State. Twenty years later, the CWA had 113 rest rooms, ten seaside homes, five hostels and two clubs, one in Perth and one in Albany. There were 312 active branches in the State in 1974, and another 136 that had formed and disbanded over the period. The number stood at 220 in 1998.⁷

The Pingaring CWA Branch was officially opened by State President, Mrs Roma Dempster on 2 November 1949, at a meeting held at the home of Branch President Grace Turner. As well as fifteen local members, the Great Southern Division President and Vice-President were also present for the occasion. The first event organised by the Branch was a dinner held in the local hall for 150 guests to celebrate the golden wedding anniversary of Pingaring residents Mr & Mrs Alex McCallum. CWA meetings at this time were held in the school shelter shed. The following year meetings were held at the school or the hall, depending on where sporting events were being held, with the Branch catering for afternoon tea for the event. In 1954, Mrs O'Neill Snr made her home available for meetings.⁸

In 1953, a building fund was begun to provide a permanent meeting place for the Branch. Luke Price was approached regarding land for a building. He provided a three-quarter acre (3036 sqm) site, designated Roe Location 2251, which was granted to the Branch on 7 March 1958.⁹ The site was adjacent to the general store, and there was a previous building on the land before it was granted to the CWA. The post office had been originally run from the store, but when Percy Byass left the store in 1937, Alex McCallum took over as postmaster in a separate operation. He relocated a house from his farm to the site adjacent to the store and occupied it with his wife. Miss J. M. Baker took over as postmistress in 1950, occupying the McCallum's house. By 1954, the McCallum residence had been removed and a new residence had been constructed on the north side of the site, with the post office operating from there.¹⁰

Funds for construction of *Pingaring CWA Rooms* were raised by various events including card parties, stalls, cash donations and a donation of two sheep from each farmer, which raised £200. The balance of the finance was provided by a loan from the Grain Pool of WA, which administered a fund

⁶ West Australian Country Women's Association (Inc), *Annual Report*, 1952, [p. 5].

⁷ Erickson, Rica, Gibbings, B. & Higgins, L., *Her Name is Woman*, CWA, Perth, 1974, pp. 2-6, 109-113; Kelly, Barbara, Haywood, Rona & Smeeton, Patricia, *A Continuing Story: A continuation of the history of the Country Women's Association of Western Australia 1974-1999*, CWA, Perth, 1999, pp.177-181.

⁸ 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', typescript provided by Pingaring CWA, pp. 1-5; *The History of Pingaring 1923-1973*, op cit, p. 13.

⁹ 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, p. 5; Certificate of Title Vol. 1208 Fol. 204, 7 March 1958.

¹⁰ Gray, Laura, *Shire of Kulin Municipal Inventory of Heritage Places*, January 1997, Place No. 13; 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, p. 5.

built up from levies on grain growers and from which it could provide loans free of interest to branches in grain growing areas.¹¹

In 1954, Mr Mayhew was given the contract to make and lay the cement bricks for *Pingaring CWA Rooms*. When Mr Mayhew had to leave the work, J. Moore continued with the bricklaying, which was eventually finished by K. O'Neill. In 1955, a half-wall (balustrade) was built around the verandah by local residents Mr Garard, K. O'Neill, Lance Jones and Ross Murray. In 1956, the roof framework was added by Mr White and the roofing finished by a group of local men. CWA members then held busy bees to paint the place. Total cost of the building was about £1,000 of which £700 had been paid, leaving only £300 owing on the Wheat Pool loan at time of opening. This debt was finalised in 1961. That year, *Pingaring CWA Rooms* was insured for £1,900, an indication of the amount of voluntary work provided during construction.¹²

Pingaring CWA Rooms was opened on 14 November 1956 by Mrs Sylvia Buckley, President of Roe Division to which Pingaring CWA had belonged since 1953. Members of surrounding branches, Shire representatives and clergy were present at the opening, which was followed by a 'social afternoon and sumptuous afternoon tea' in the new building. A room in *Pingaring CWA Rooms* was furnished for use by a visiting doctor and health clinic nurse. Dr Cranley from Kondinin began a weekly service, accompanied once a fortnight by the Infant Health Sister from Corrigin, Sister Thomas. The doctor's visits were subsequently discontinued, but Sister Thomas continued her service for fifteen years.¹³

Over the ensuing years, Pingaring CWA held handcraft demonstrations for members, slide and card evenings, wine & cheese tasting, concerts, Melbourne Cup luncheons, an annual ball in the agricultural hall, and stalls; provided catering for stock sales, football matches, picture shows, Farmers' Union Zone Council meetings, a CALM seminar, weddings and other celebrations; lobbied for better services for the district, including better telephone service, provision of a mail bag on the bus, reopening of the railway line, a resident doctor; attended functions at surrounding CWA branches and at headquarters in Perth; sent representatives to State conferences and Division meetings; invited guest speakers from various organisations and interests such as Greening Australia; and, sponsored a young person on a 10-day *Leeuwin* voyage. Funds raised by the Branch through their various activities were directed to the needs of their own group and community, as well contributing to the Emergency Welfare Fund and other CWA State projects.¹⁴

The Pingaring Playgroup used *Pingaring CWA Rooms* as their venue, erecting a shed in the backyard to store equipment and sharing the cost of concreting the back verandah area in 1979. Pingaring CWA celebrated its 50th anniversary on 29 September 1999, with former members, members from Lake Grace, Lake Varley and Hyden branches and Divisional representatives attending a luncheon at the Pingaring Golf Club.

In 2000, following two poorly attended meetings, a survey was conducted to ascertain if there was still a need for CWA in the district. A meeting held in

11 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, p. 5; Erickson, Rica, Gibbings, B. & Higgins, L., op cit, pp. 91-94..

12 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, pp. 5-6, 8.

13 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, pp. 6-7.

14 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', pp. 8-17; 1984-1994, pp. 1-2 & 1994-2002, p. 1.

May was overwhelmingly in support of the branch continuing, with many new ideas put forward by younger members. Sausage sizzles became a popular event, with one being held at the Pingaring siding after the CBH wheat bin was removed. In conjunction with the Pingaring Progress Association, a health and stress seminar was organised and held over two days, the first day being for men and the second day for women. A grant of \$1,975 was provided for this event. Cancer Research has been a major recipient of fund raising in recent years. A Pingaring CWA Recipe Book was begun in 2001.¹⁵

Improvements and work carried out on *Pingaring CWA Rooms* over the years has included: fencing of the grounds (1960); cupboard placed in powder room for use of clinic and church requisites, and 200 gallon tank and stand erected by busy bee (1962); building renovations comprising replacement of verandah columns with posts and removal of verandah wall, and renovations to kitchen (1965); portable toilet installed (1973); roof damaged by Cyclone Alby repaired by Dick Hicks, and septic toilet installed and water connected by Shire (1978); back verandah cemented (1979); structural engineer's report on the place resulting in repairs to guttering and foundations and replastering of walls (1983-84); native garden planted (1984-85).¹⁶ Timber windows have been replaced with aluminium, possibly as part of the 1984-85 renovations. Cracks in the building are currently causing concern.¹⁷

Pingaring CWA Rooms continues to be occupied by the active Pingaring CWA Branch, serving a district population of about 200.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Pingaring CWA Rooms is situated on the east side of Luke Price Street, the main and only street in the town of Pingaring. The building is set back from the road in line with the dwelling on the north side, although the general store on the south side has a greater setback and the south side of the *Pingaring CWA Rooms* adjoins the open gravel carpark in front of the store. The site is bounded on the west (street) and south boundaries by a 900mm high chain link fence. A gate, central on the street frontage, accesses the front verandah and entry. There is a double gate on the south side that is the main entry for the members who utilise the kitchen door entry on the north side. The rear of the site is not delineated, although a star picket and wire fence is in place on a diagonal from each side fence to the outside WC. The site is flat and mostly undeveloped except for several gimlet trees in the vicinity of the front and south side boundaries. There is a toilet central in the rear of the yard, and a colourbond garden shed in that vicinity.

Pingaring CWA Rooms does not display any characteristics of a particular style. It is a single-storey vernacular concrete block construction with surrounding verandahs. The single room building with an enclosed rear verandah has a symmetrical frontage. The central entry door is flanked by windows each side. The concrete block walls are unpainted showing the patterned grey concrete face blocks with a smooth concrete lintel across the front at window head height. The rear skillion enclosure under the verandah is timber framed and clad with battened asbestos sheets. The verandah is supported by slender steel posts outside the concrete build-up around the perimeter of the concrete floor. The concrete verandah floor evidences a build up along each

¹⁵ 'Pingaring CWA History, 1994-2002', pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ 'Pingaring CWA History, 1949-1984', op cit, pp. 8-17.

¹⁷ 'Pingaring CWA History, 1994-2002', pp. 1-2

side, making higher levels than the front and northeast corner floors, which are sharply ramped up approximately 50mm to the side floor levels. The original (front) verandah floor has a number of serious cracks in each of the concrete panels along its length. An intrusive timber framed asbestos clad toilet has been constructed under the verandah on the north side.

The main roof, over the meeting room, is gabled, although the surrounding verandah, at break pitch, is skillion and hipped on the corners. The roof is clad with corrugated iron. The painted galvanised gutters are ogee profile and the downpipes are round. The front and rear gables are infilled with asbestos sheeting. The chimney is a square form constructed of concrete blocks.

The original timber framed windows have been replaced with sliding aluminium windows within the timber frames, on block sills. The front door is timber framed with five horizontal panels of opaque glass in a vertical format. The rear kitchen entry door is ledge and braced and internal doors are flush panel.

The footprint of the building is a square with surrounding verandah. The front entry door under the front verandah opens into a single space that is the meeting room. The room has the original timber floorboards, covered by carpet, hard plaster walls and battened plasterboard ceiling with small decorative cornice and square vented sections. The fireplace central on the east wall, directly in line with the front door, is detailed in face brick with a soldier course across the top and a jarrah ledge. In the north east corner of the room, a door accesses the kitchen. Near the door on the north wall is a serious diagonal crack that is evident on the exterior and interior of the wall.

The kitchen and store at the south end are within the original verandah space. They have concrete floors, asbestos lined walls and the raked ceiling is lined with battened plasterboard. The kitchen fireplace, back-to-back with the main fireplace, still has the original Metters stove and the chimneybreast has a recessed shelf area.

The meeting room is furnished with the original furniture including table, chairs, cupboards, side tables, framed mottos and paintings and the clock.

The rear toilet is a concrete block construction, but is no longer operable. The colourbond shed is of no heritage significance.

Pingaring CWA Rooms is generally in fair condition. The walls and verandah floors evidence cracks that indicate a possible structural problem. The place has always, and continues, to fulfil the function of a focus for the CWA in the Pingaring area, with minimal changes to accommodate not only the changing needs of the members, including the provision of toilet facilities on the verandah, but also responses to the condition of the place that included the concrete scrim over the side verandah floors, and the installation of aluminium framed windows. Despite those changes, the place is mostly intact, and demonstrates a high degree of integrity and authenticity.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are fifty-eight CWA rooms and halls listed on the Heritage Council database. In 2001, the Heritage Council undertook to identify a representative group of CWA halls for assessment, as part of a program to recognise women's history sites in the State. Based on information from CWA histories and Regional Advisers, 12 CWA halls were identified for assessment. These were P8577 *Mundaring Sculpture Park*, P15269 *Baandee CWA Rest Room*,

Nungarin, P0618 Road Board Office (fmr), Cuballing, P3100 CWA Rooms, Capel, P1427 CWA Rest Room, Kulin, P10684 Kalgarin CWA, P2616 Victoria Plains Road Board Office, Calingiri, P6912 Pingaring CWA, P12431 CWA Rooms, Ballidu, P10936 Hyden CWA, P13926 Walkaway CWA Rooms, and P13378 CWA Meeting Rooms, Wonthella. Pingaring CWA Rooms was recommended for inclusion in this group as it is a prominent building in the town and therefore a good representative example of the importance of the CWA in rural areas.

Of these, five have since been entered into the Register of Heritage Places (Cuballing, Pingaring, Hyden, Walkaway and Mundaring) and Wonthella has been assessed as Below Threshold for Registration.

Of these: Cuballing CWA occupies the former Cuballing Road Board Office, a stone building, which was constructed as an agricultural hall in 1898; Pingaring (1956) and Hyden (1950) have purpose built rooms constructed of cement block with iron roof; the purpose built rooms at Walkaway were constructed in 1950, in timber and asbestos with iron roof; and Wonthella CWA purchased an existing c.1940s timber and asbestos residence, which has had the interior walls removed to form a hall space. These CWA Rooms all continue to be used for that original purpose.

13.4 REFERENCES

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
